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Senate Passes Two-Month AIP Extension ***S 643 Gives More Time for Slot Debate***

On a vote of 100-0, the United States Senate on March 17 approved a short-term extension (S 463) to keep the nation's airport improvement funds flowing to the states through May 31, 1999. The current authorization runs out on March 31, and senators need more time to debate a continuing argument over a longer-term reauthorization measure (S 82).

The House of Representatives had earlier passed H.R. 99 to extend the airport funding authority through the end of the fiscal year. The Senate, in addition to passing S 463, amended H.R. 99 to include its two-month extension and passed the bill on voice vote. This action demonstrates the Senate's intention to fully back only a two-month extension of the aviation programs.

For their part, House leaders have indicated that they support the two-month extension. Action on the measure now moves back to the House. A vote is expected before the Easter recess, which begins March 27.

The main reason for the two-month extension in the Senate is continued dispute over how a longer-term reauthorization bill should treat slots at the nation's four slot-controlled airports. Senate **Commerce Committee Chairman John McCain** (R – AZ) expects that this dispute and other controversies over S 82 will be resolved soon. McCain urged **Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott** (R – MS) to schedule S 82 for a floor vote right after the Easter recess. The comparable House measure (H.R. 1000) also has not yet been scheduled for a floor vote.

House, Senate Committees Reveal Budget Resolution ***Transportation Allocation Reflects TEA 21 Levels***

Last week, the House and Senate Budget Committees proposed nearly identical budget resolutions for Fiscal Year 2000.

Amid hopes that both houses would submit identical budget plans, the Senate Budget Committee voted along party lines last week for a \$1.7 trillion budget resolution. To produce a nearly identical bill (which, of course, would preclude the need for a Conference) no amendments were accepted in committee, setting the stage for a possible minority party resolution to be offered in the form of a substitute on the Senate floor.

The Fiscal Year 2000 chairman's mark of the bill increases funding for national security,

elementary and secondary education, fully funds Violent Crime Trust Fund programs, funds the President's request for the Census, fully funds the guaranteed funding levels under TEA 21, increases funds for veterans discretionary health programs, and doubles the President's proposal for the National Institute of Health. The mark assumes the adoption of **Chairman Pete Domenici's** (R – NM) bill to revise the federal budget system in which a super majority would be needed for emergency spending designation. Furthermore, the mark states that comparisons to the President's budget are difficult since his budget busts the spending caps allowed under the Balanced Budget Act.

Within the budget resolution, transportation funding is listed under Function 400. The Senate committee made no changes in the obligation limits established under TEA 21, and the committee did not follow the President's proposal to redistribute gasoline revenue above the TEA 21 estimate. Budget Authority is funded at \$51.8 billion compared to \$50.8 billion in 1999, and Outlays are funded at \$45.8 billion compared to \$43.8 billion in 1999.

For its part, the House Budget Committee on Wednesday approved a \$1.74 trillion spending budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The committee's 22-18 vote was strictly along party lines.

As we saw in the Senate committee mark, the House Budget Committee released little detailed information about its budget resolution.

Committee Chairman John Kasich (R – OH) provided staff with the total spending and revenues figures for each of the budget categories.

For the transportation function (400), the House Budget Committee would provide Budget Authority of \$51.8 billion for Fiscal Year 2000 compared to \$51.3 billion in 1999, and Outlays are funded at \$45.8 billion

compared to \$44.0 billion in 1999. The budget projects spending for transportation to increase slightly each year through Fiscal Year 2003, the last year of TEA 21.

Upon seeing the House budget proposal, **Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bud Shuster** (R – PA) began developing a possible amendment to the budget to increase funding for aviation programs. Shuster may amend the budget when it gets to the House floor, an action similar to that taken two years ago in an attempt to provide increased funding for highway and transit programs. That effort lost by only two votes. This time, Shuster wants to see the transportation function amount grow by \$18 billion to mirror the annual funding levels in H.R. 1000, Shuster's \$90 billion five-year FAA reauthorization legislation.

At press time, neither budget committee had provided other detailed information on transportation funding in the budget. As additional details become available, we will provide you with more information on how the budget resolutions in both houses may affect specific transportation programs nationwide and in Texas.

Slater Testifies on Transportation Appropriations ***DeLay, Granger Ask for Release of Texas AIP Funds***

At a House Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee meeting on Thursday, U.S. **Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater** testified in support of the Clinton Administration's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2000 transportation spending. Defending the President's proposal to reallocated additional Highway Trust Fund revenues above projection to other transportation programs, Slater stated "Our interpretation is that that \$1.5 billion in extra resources that were not anticipated can be divvied up as we proposed." **Representative**

Harold Rogers (R - KY) responded that the plan would "create a further disparity between donor and donee states."

House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R – Sugar Land) and fellow Texan **Kay Granger** (R – Fort Worth) pressed the Secretary to release Texas' state block grant funds for Fiscal Year 1999. Although the Texans asked for immediate action to release the funds, Slater gave no definite commitment but instead said that the FAA was "working on a solution" before the end of the month.

The *Federal Flyer* is a publication of the TxDOT Legislative Affairs Office. It is intended to provide up-to-date information on major legislative activities in the 105th Congress for the management of the Texas Department of Transportation, state leaders, and others interested in Texas transportation issues. This report will also feature key activities in the national transportation community. Sources include news services and staff reports.

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